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# ALASKA People



March/April/May 2003

## Danger Isn't Their Game

Surveyors Have Best National Safety Record

When it comes to danger, it's definitely no stranger to our field surveyors. Each summer, while many of us are sipping coffee in the safety of our offices, our surveyors are out in the Alaska wild doing their jobs in a short, intense and inherently dangerous environment.

So when **Mike Wilson** stepped up to the podium on April 1 in Phoenix, Arizona to pick up the Department of Interior's most prestigious merit safety award for his employees, he was thankful that finally his people would get the widespread recognition they deserve. Wilson, supervisor of field surveys for the last 15 years, knows what it takes to run a safe operation. He knows of bears stalking his employees or of terrain so steep and choked with vegetation that one misstep can send you to the promised land. So he's thrilled that other employees will know about his safety-conscious crew. "The folks working for me are the greatest. I appreciate every single one of them. They make it happen," said Wilson.

But if you talk to **Dan Johnson**, field surveys branch chief, he says Wilson is the driving force behind the branch's safety consciousness. Wilson is an aviation safety instructor and long-time CDSO for field surveys. He blends his safety knowledge into his supervision.

Every spring before field season everyone in the branch



takes two weeks of training in aviation, bear and helicopter safety, firearms certification and chainsaw operator's courses.

**Ken Higgins**, Campbell Tract's safety officer who wrote their winning safety nomination, says he couldn't believe their safety record until he did the numbers. "Their lost time and incident rates are amazing while showing significant increases in productivity." (see charts page 2)

And they did it despite the dangers and challenges of their work.



In picture 1)Tasha Huhta, 2)Nathan Erickson, 3)Sam Morris, 4)Josh Small, 5)Mike Harmening, 6)Gary McIntyre, 7)Rollin Westrum, 8)Roger Blouch, 9)Dan Johnson, 10)John Pex, 11) Pat Twohy, 12)Marshal Wade, 13)Chris Wiita, 14)Orrin Frederick, 15)Joe Burns, 16)Mike Wilson. *Not pictured* Kurt Huhta, Rich Helm, Bruce Ogonowski, Maryann Nelson, Craig Durart, Pete Nanok, Dave Ciampa, Greg Duren and Doug Dickinson

*continued to page 2*



continued from front page

Being a surveyor in Alaska requires a certain mental and physical toughness. Besides knowing mathematics, land laws and survey platting, our surveyors must operate a range of measuring devices from the basic transit to the up-to-date satellite triangulation systems with acute accuracy. Couple this with work risks then you begin to appreciate their incomparable safety record.

First the risks are many. The most typical ones are associated with foot travel. Laden with survey equipment and brush clearing tools our surveyors trek across Alaska's rain forests, tundra, taiga, steep mountains and glacial moraines in search of monuments. Falls, sprains and strains are the most common injuries.

Our surveyors usually travel by helicopter due to a lack of roads

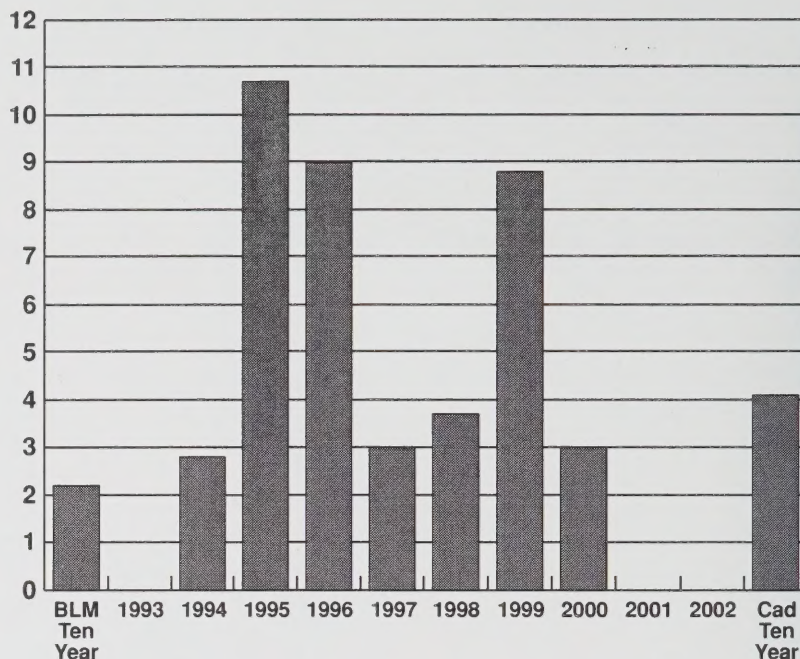
**"Cadastral field surveys is a perfect example of how to integrate safety into our business and management practices."**

Mike Rose  
State Safety Officer

and the remoteness of sites. The daily grind of multiple take offs and landings in unimproved landing areas and into steep, mountainous terrain puts our surveyors at risk. The risks are significant when you consider one helicopter typically services two-to-four crews simultaneously. A ship rarely shuts down when loading and unloading crews, who are in close proximity of rotating blades. A typical field season involves 900 hours of helicopter flight time.

Surveying done from boats presents the risks of drowning, hypothermia and collisions with

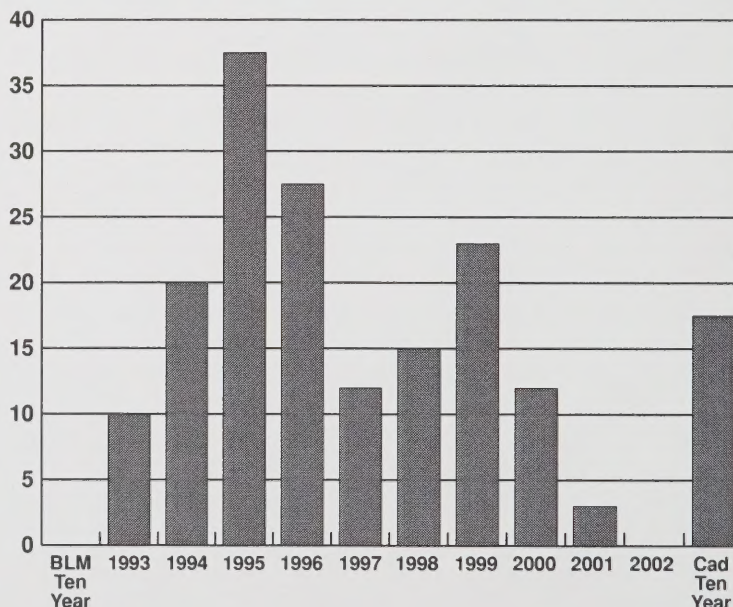
**Chart 1: Cadastral Survey, Lost Time Rates 1993—2002**



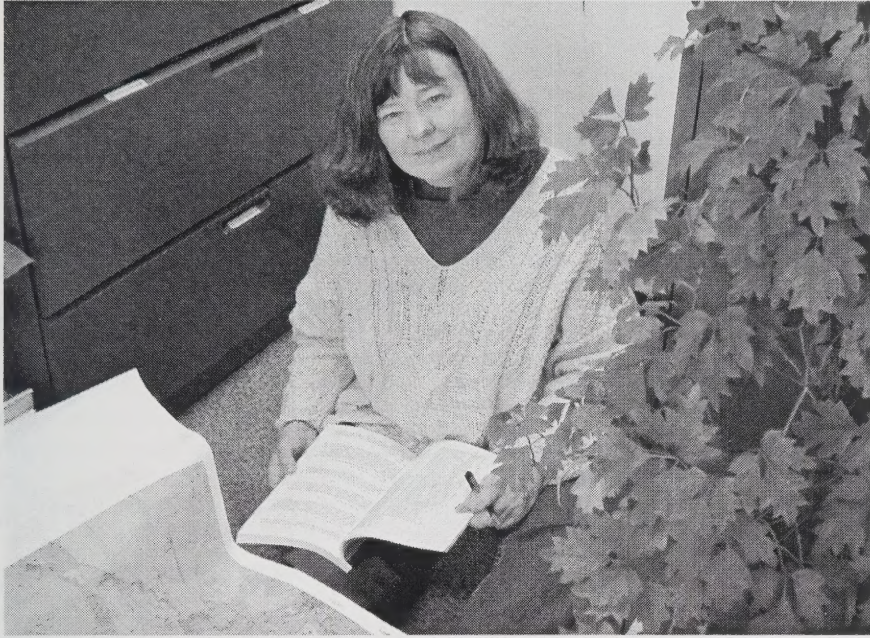
submerged objects. Even the clearing and brushing of trees and brush when setting monuments can put surveyors at risk of being hit or crushed by trees or being injured by a chainsaw. The amazing thing is, despite all these job hazards, the branch of field surveys had no loss of time for 2000 and 2001 and no accidents

for 2002. Wilson says he owes it to his people but he also acknowledges the commitment from management with funding and training. Statewide safety officer **Mike Rose** says Cadastral Survey is a perfect example of how to integrate safety into our business and management practices.

**Chart 2: Cadastral Survey (Alaska), Incident Rates 1993—2002**







**Donna Redding**, Archaeologist, Anchorage Field Office

When **Donna Redding** of Reno, Nevada started college in the 70s at Cal State in Chico, California she wanted to be a biologist. She changed her mind and her major, because, "I just didn't get chemistry and physics," said Redding. A course she took and did get was archaeology.

Redding, the Anchorage Field Office archaeologist, earned a BA, MA and PhD degrees, with the last degree coming from the University of California at Los Angeles.

She's shy yet sincere, quick to laugh yet reserved. And when she opens up, especially about herself,

she's charmingly honest.

What was the appeal of her chosen profession? "Archaeology is a way to travel both through time and space," said the science fiction buff. "I find the research associated with archaeology to be the most enjoyable. I'm always learning."

Research tends to dominate most of Redding's time now. She said that when she was younger she liked going out in the field and digging. "Now I like looking through old records. That's probably the reason I didn't choose cultural anthropology. This way I can learn without having to talk. Plus, I've

slept on enough gravel bars in my life."

To pay for college, Redding worked at the university library and participated in various work-study projects and performed research for professors. One summer she was part of a cultural resource management team that went to the field to excavate a site. "That's when I discovered per diem," she said. "You can't imagine how wonderful per diem is to a college student."

In 1984, she worked her "first real job." "I left California to work with **Bob Gall** in the BLM Northern Field Office. I was participating in a student work program and got a stipend to come to Alaska and work for the summer. We spent that summer at Galbraith Lake on the North Slope. It was a real eye opener, too, when Bob and I were floating the Atigun River. I had never been rafting and it wasn't until too late that I learned that Bob had never been rafting either."

Having lived through the rafting experience, Redding was hooked on Alaska. She took every educational opportunity to return, working in areas around the Unalakleet and Central Kuskowim rivers, only to have to return to California. "I kept hoping to get a full-time job in Alaska. There just never seem to be any jobs."

In 1990 she accepted volunteer work in the AFO. Then in 1992, she hit pay dirt. A full time archaeology position came open. "When the door opened enough for my foot to get in, I stuck it all the way in. This was my dream realized. Being in Alaska is so important. There really was no other job for me."

BLM allows her a broad range of duties, not limiting her to either interpretation or Section 106 compliance. "We really do everything at BLM unlike other agencies. There's a lot of freedom and always something new."

## Field Surveys

### Work Performance

### Accomplishments

	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002
Miles of original (new) line surveyed	131	1132	1603
Miles of existing line resurveyed	356	83	93
Miles of metes and bounds surveyed	38	237	64
Total miles of surveyed line	525	1452	1764



continued from page 3, Redding profile

When asked what she would change about her job, Redding says, "I would pay myself more."

This summer Redding, with the help from visual specialist **Carol Belenski** and interpretive specialist **Gene Ervine**, hopes to complete an interpretive project in Sitka commemorating the colorful history of a Russian blockhouse and stockade, the Holy Trinity Church (built into the stockade surround the little Russian town of Novoarkangel'sk) and Orthodox Priest St. Iakov who is buried under the steps of the church. The project is located on just over a half acre BLM property that is visited by thousands of tourists yearly.

Away from the job people may be surprised to know that Redding spends a lot of time singing with her dogs Archie and Opie, two airedale terriers. "Unlike humans,

## Russian Block House History

In 1799 Alexandr Baranov settled an area seven miles north of current day Sitka. Three years later Tlingits attacked and destroyed the building and most of its inhabitants. By 1804, Baranov would battle the Tlingits for six days. The Tlingits would abandon the area and Baranov built three Russian blockhouses and stockade to protect Novoarkangel's (current site of Sitka). One side of the BLM managed blockhouse site faces the old Tlingit community along Katlian Street and on the other side is the site of the old Russian barracks and parade ground now occupied by the Alaska Pioneers Home.

The current blockhouse is a replica of Blockhouse D originally located near the Russian Cemetery. Blockhouse C at the site fell down in



1899. Blockhouse D was demolished in 1921. In 1926 the community raised enough money to build a replica in Totem Park. Over the years the blockhouse replica fell into disrepair and was bulldozed and burned by a Park employee in 1959. The community was upset and in 1962 the Park Service built another replica.

they are very appreciative of my talents - singing, songwriting and choreography," says Redding.

Hmmm, a shy, singing, archeologist. What a find!! *Written by Donna Gindle, Anchorage Field Office public affairs specialist.*

## Ripples, Waves and Reflections

employees portray favorite influential women during Women's History Month



Belinda Coonrod



Myrna Tihonovich



Lois Simenson

The Federal Women's Program (FWP) is always different since **Tonyua Abrom** became the FWP coordinator. And the program for Women's History Month in March was no exception. With the theme of Ripples, Waves and Reflections, four employees gave tribute to the women who had the biggest impact in their lives.

For **Myrna Tihonovich**, it was her Swedish grandmother. Transformed by bonnet, and long dress

and apron, Tihonovich, the state director's staff assistant, took on the persona of her grandmother. Those employees watching the program in the Denali Room learned of a woman who came to this country as a child from Sweden. Settling in Nebraska she lived a hard existence on a farm and as a single woman would homestead and gain title to 160 acres from the General Land Office (later to become the Bureau of Land Management).

**Belinda Coonrod**, EEO assistant became her Hispanic aunt. A self deprecating housewife whose skills as a midwife were legendary in her small Texas hometown she was so respected that doctors would seek her expertise. It became apparent from Coonrod's monologue that her aunt's dedication to midwifery and strength influenced countless people.



continued from pg. 4, *Ripples, Waves*

**Lois Simenson's** monologue was dedicated to her older sisters. Through a series of vignettes, she told stories of mainly her oldest sister who gave Simenson timely advice throughout her life. Through humor and poignancy, Simenson, a JPO research coordinator, was able to convey her sister's values

of self worth and happiness. She also made Simenson face the fact that the most difficult obstacle can be a lack of faith in yourself.

**Roz Holland**, a Conveyances land law examiner spoke about the influence on her life of the Sweet Adelines, a women's organization promoting education and harmony through singing barbershop

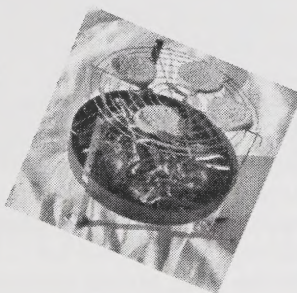
chorus.

**Barbara Walker** and **Robin Middleton** stepped up to the podium to introduce the participants and the program concluded with Abrom reading an original poem written by Tihonovich mirroring the theme and giving credit to influential women in our lives.

## Tok Employee Designs New FIREPAN

*Growing up and floating rivers on the east coast, Kevan Cooper, realty technician from BLM's Tok office, is all too familiar with fire rings, partially burned garbage, scorched vegetation, and campground fires that got away.*

*Although Cooper regularly floats Alaska's Fortymile National Wild and Scenic River, he has yet to see these problems, but he is concerned that increased use may cause similar problems. "We experience little use on remote segments of the river. I want to take a pro-active approach to protect the primitive environment that still exists there," says Cooper.*



Firepans seem like an obvious approach, although their use is not required for most non-commercial trips on Alaska rivers.

After receiving suggestions through the River Management Society's web server, he decided to design his own firepan.

Working with the Alaska Fire Service's machine shop to fabricate the firepan, Cooper chose a pan with an aluminum base, primarily because of its light five-pound weight. He looked at firepans weighing from 25 to 30 pounds. "Weight can be a significant factor for floaters flying into remote airstrips," says Cooper.

Sturdy legs extend through the base and serve as supports for a grill, a feature many firepans lack. Notches in the legs allow the grill to be set at different heights. A five feet by five feet heat blanket is included to help prevent fires and on-ground scorching. Everything fits into a round, nylon bag.

Last summer BLM employees floating the Fortymile river were the first to use the firepans. The

Fortymile is in east central Alaska and drains into the Yukon River near the Canadian border. He also loaned several firepans to an air charter company that flies floaters into the area.

The charter offers clients use of the pan which they return at the end of their float trip.



**Kevan Cooper**

**Title:** realty technician  
**Job:** monitors wildlife, trespass and long-term campsites supporting State dredge mining  
**Office:** with Tok Field Station since 1998

Leave No Trace Ethics flyers are included with each firepan. "We can't do enough to educate the public about resource impacts and how they affect our surrounding environment," he says.

"I think river managers in the lower 48 first had to see negative impacts to the backcountry before they received support to take corrective actions. I hope Alaska can learn a lesson from that and take a proactive approach that keeps our backcountry pristine." Initial reviews of the firepan are positive. Cooper estimates his firepan costs around \$25 in supplies. For more information about this firepan design call Cooper at 907.883.5121 or Kevan\_Cooper@ak.blm.gov.

## COMINGS

**Adele Bacon**, operations & maint. specialist, Joint Pipeline Office (JPO), Fairbanks

**Greg Barrett**, GIS contractor, Cadastral Survey

**Roy Bobbitt**, operations & maint. spec., JPO, Valdez

**Rick Carbone**, dispatcher, Alaska Fire Service, Tanana Zone

**David Ciampa** SCEP conversion from Penn State, Cadastral Survey

**Natalie M. Cooper**, realty specialist, Anchorage Field Office

**Tim Crawford**, computer specialist, IRM staff, Campbell Tract Facility

**Chuck Denton**, hydrologist, Anchorage Field Office

**Betty Drinkwine**, secretary, Anchorage Field Office

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*continued from page 5*

Tom Edgerton, supervisor, Taliqpiq team, Northern Field Office (NFO)

**Nathan Erickson**, surveyor, Cadastral Survey

**Eileen Ford**, land law examiner, Conveyance Management

**Craig Hice**, computer specialist, IRM staff, Campbell Tract

**John "Brad" Honerlaw**, law enforcement ranger

**Derek Huebner**, natural resource specialist, NPRA team, NFO

**Carole Huey**, dispatcher, Alaska Fire Service, Tanana Zone

**Thom Jennings**, land law examiner, Conveyance Mgmt

**Richard Kemnitz**, hydrologist, NPRA Team, Northern Field Office

**Judena "Dee Dee" Klemovitch**, branch secretary, Conveyances

**Steve Kraft**, fire suppression specialist, Alaska Fire Service, Upper Yukon Zone

**Jim McAllister**, land law examiner, Conveyance Management

**Stacie McIntosh**, anthropologist, NPRA team, Northern Field Office

**Darrin McLeod**, civil engineer, Northern Field Office

**Steven Monsma**, industrial equipment operator, Alaska Fire Service

**Sam Morris**, SCEP surveyor, Cadastral Survey

**Gary McIntyre**, surveyor, Cadastral Survey

**Ron Onyon**, secretary, Resources, Lands, Planning

**Erika Reed**, land law examiner, Conveyance Mgmt

**Gina Scantlebury**, SCEP land law examiner, Conveyance Mgmt

**Carol Shobe**, land law examiner, Conveyance Management

**Joshua Small**, SCEP surveyor, Cadastral Survey

**Shawn K. Thompson**, aircraft attendant, Alaska Fire Service

**Asa Winchester**, STEP land law examiner, Conveyance Mgmt

**Luise Woelflein**, environmental education coordinator, Campbell Creek Science Center, AFO

## GOINGS

**Monica Alvarez**, air service operator, Alaska Fire Service, Upper Yukon Zone, resigned

**Mike Birtles**, surveyor, Cadastral Survey to Montana State Office

**Linda Birtles**, cartographic technician, Cadastral Survey to Montana State Office

**Linda Butts**, realty spec, Northern Field Office to Arizona State Office

**Karen Collie**, land law examiner, Conveyance Mgmt, retired

**Steve Cummings**, land law examiner, Conveyance Management to Forest Service, Anchorage

**Dave Dash**, division chief, AFS to National Interagency Fire Center

**Sharon Dean**, contact representative, Public Room, Support Services, retired

**David Follett**, dispatcher, Alaska Fire Service, Upper Yukon Zone, resigned

**Martin Hansen**, realty specialist, Joint Pipeline Office to National Park Service, Anchorage

**Stuart Hirsh**, realty group manager, AFO to Oregon

**Reta Hubbard**, land law examiner, Conveyance Management, retired

**Kathy Jensen**, realty specialist, Glennallen Field Office

**Bobby Johnson**, heavy equipment mechanic, Property, Campbell Tract Facility, retired

**Bertha King**, human resources assistant, Human Resources to Fish and Wildlife Service, Anchorage

**Matt Kurchinski**, surveyor, Cadastral Survey to Idaho private sector

**Rob McWhorter**, TAPS coordinator, Joint Pipeline Office, retired

**Dan Ontiveros**, surveyor, Cadastral Survey to Nevada State Office

**Adrien Rodriguez**, surveyor, Cadastral Survey to Arizona

**Linda Rundell**, associate state director to state director, New Mexico State Office

**Jane Miller Sanderford**, land law examiner to BLM Las Vegas

**Terry Shuey**, computer specialist, IRM staff, Campbell Tract Facility to Minneapolis

**Joan Steltenpohl**, computer assistant, retired, IRM, Support Svcs.

**Roger Stilpec**, map and records spec., Alaska Fire Service

**Pam Stuart**, special agent to New Mexico special agent

**Gene Terland**, Resources branch chief to associate state director, Utah State Office

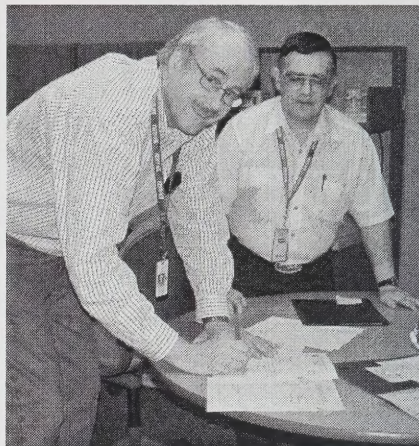
**Carl Thorpe**, fuels specialist, Property Services, Campbell Tract Facility, retired

**Sandie Wallace**, human resources specialist, to DOD, Germany

**Pat Turner**, land status assistant, Cadastral Survey, resigned

**Jim Woelfel**, maintenance, Campbell Tract to New Mexico

**Bonnie Willer**, computer specialist, Conveyance Mgmt, retired



**Gary Reimer** caps his first week as new Conveyances deputy state director by signing his first conveyance to a Native Corporation with branch chief **John Tom's** assistance. The conveyance helps toward the division's goal of closing out the land transfer program by 2009.

## TRANSITION

**Greg Balen**, acting chief to chief, Title and Land Status Section, Cadastral Survey

**Nora Benson**, land law examiner, Conveyance Management, promotion  
**Allison Boyce**, administrative Assistant, Northern Field Office to Alaska Fire Service

**Candy Grimes**, volunteer, Docket to Conveyances Management

**Stephanie Clusiau**, land law examiner, Conveyance Management, promotion

**Craig Dukart**, land surveyor, Field Survey to GCDB, Cadastral Survey

**Renee Fencel**, legal assistant to land law examiner, Conveyance Management

**Doug Gibson**, cartographic technician, Field Survey to GCDB, Cadastral Survey

**John Leaf**, SCEP to land law examiner, Conveyance Management

**Kay Gumpert**, land law examiner, Conveyance Management to Public Information Center, Support Services

**Becky Johnson**, land law examiner, Conveyance Mgmt, promotion

**Patricia LaFramboise**, land law examiner, Conveyance Mgmt, promotion



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**Peter Nanok**, surveyor, Field Survey to GCDB, Cadastral Survey

**Paul Moss**, surveyor, Field Survey to GCDB, Cadastral Survey

**Ron Onyon**, secretary, Resources, Lands, Planning to land law examiner, Conveyance Mgmt

**Bob Perry**, land law examiner, Conveyance Mgmt, promotion

**Mike Harmening**, surveyor, Field Survey to GCDB, Cadastral Survey

**Gary Reimer**, deputy authorized officer, Joint Pipeline Office to DSD Conveyance Management

**Jerri Sansone**, land law examiner, Conveyances to Res., Lands, Planning

**John Spacer**, cartographic technician, Field Survey to GCDB, Cadastral Survey

**Rory Spurlock**, land law examiner, Conveyances to Res., Lands, Planning

**Carol Taylor**, contact representative, Public Information Center to Resource, Lands, and Planning

**Marshal Wade**, surveyor, Field Survey to GCDB, Cadastral Survey

**Brenda Zenan**, DSD Conveyances to Special Assistant to State Director

## IN MEMORIAM

**Helen Cameron**, retired Conveyances office automation assistant, died April 2003

**Donna Doney Jones**, land law examiner, Conveyance Management died May 2002

**Brenda Moeller**, former computer specialist, Information died of cancer.

**Marie Cynthia Makahilahila**, land status assistant, died June 2002.

**Carolyn Bailey**, retired Conveyances adjudicator died in August 2002 from aneurysm

**Greg DeBord**, materials handler with the Alaska Fire Service died in July 2002

**Lee Douthit**, former Northern Field Office subsistence coordinator died in August 2002

**Steven Leskowsky**, former Anchorage District employee died from Lou Gehrig's disease in August 2002

Personnel changes happening since 2002 to the present as reported by divisions.



## 10 Pounds in 10 Weeks

"Success isn't measured by the scale but by lifestyle changes," said Barbara McRorie, federal occupational nurse to participants of the 10 Pounds in 10 Weeks program. So when participants would complain to McRorie that they hadn't lost any weight, she'd usually counter, "You're building muscle or your inner body changes aren't visible."

Lifestyle changes were evident by the end of the 10 weeks with BLM participants drinking more water, indulging in more physical activities, making dietary changes and losing weight.

The program involved an initial lecture by McRorie. Then at the beginning of each week, participants collected information packets from the nurse's office at the Anchorage Federal Building. The packets were used to educate and motivate employees and help them track their progress. Exercise, weight loss and the drinking of water was tracked.

Federal Occupational Health offices have conducted this popular program in many lower 48

federal offices with overwhelming success. McRorie says about half of the participants usually drop out but those who stay with it realize major results because they change their habits.

"She (McRorie) said it takes 21 days to establish a new habit and she was right," said writer-editor **Teresa McPherson** reporting new dietary habits and losing 11 pounds.

Fifteen of the 25 program participants were BLMers. **Dot Tideman** racked up the most physical exercise with a total of 3,665 minutes averaging 52 minutes a day. She was in training to walk a marathon in Rome. **Lynn Lewis** and **Barbara Walker** lost the most weight at 14 pounds each. Despite losing so much weight Walker concedes she still has lifestyle changes to make which is what McRorie likes to hear.

*Some 10 Pounds Participants.* Photo above, back, (l-r) Barbara Walker, Dot Tideman, Sherri Belenski, Lynn Lewis, Teresa McPherson. Front, (l-r) Danielle Allen, Ana Dominguez, Diana Songer.



# COOL NEWS



*Julie Capps and Iditarod Winner Robert Sorlie.* Cadastral Survey's Julie Capps, (middle) an avid doglover and musher helped sponsor Robert Sorlie (right), this year's winner of the Iditarod Sled Dog Race in March.

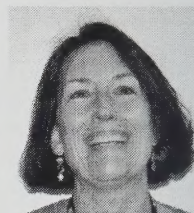
*Surgery Doesn't Deter.* Recent gallbladder surgery didn't stop, Conveyances branch chief **John Toms** from competing in a karate competition and bringing home a silver ribbon! Toms says he is quite the amateur compared to **Ron Onyon** who tried out for the Olympics in tae kwon do and even **Lynette Nakasawa** who is one of Alaska's premiere karate instructors!!

*Branch Chief Moves Into Deputy State Director Position.* **Colleen McCarthy** is the new deputy state director for Minerals. McCarthy recently was the branch chief for Energy and has also worked as an engineer for the BLM's Joint Pipeline Office.

*Ditton Gets Acting ASD Appointment.* Peter Ditton's latest acting assignment puts him into the associate state director position for a year. He's previously served as acting Deputy



Peter Ditton



Colleen McCarthy

State Director for Energy and Minerals and as the Anchorage Field Manager.

*Stubbs is Certified.* Anchorage Field Office realty specialist **Kathy Stubbs** earned certification as a senior member with the International Right-of-Way Association. The certification is awarded to right-of-way professionals who undergo training and examination in seven major right-of-way disciplines and have more than five years of professional experience.

## Alaska People

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